

Using Newspapers in the Classroom

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1 Headlines

1.1 Words

Writing sentences using headline words

Level: Elementary–Intermediate

Preparation

Select a number of headlines from a broadsheet and/or a tabloid newspaper (see note below) and cut them into individual words. Use these to compile a sheet of headline words in a jumbled order, and make one copy of this sheet for each pair of students in the class.

In class

- 1 Pair students, give each pair a copy of the words sheet and tell your students that the words have all been taken from newspaper headlines. Deal with any problem vocabulary at this stage of the activity.
- 2 Tell your students that they should try to use as many of these words as they can to make up sentences, but make it absolutely clear that they do not need to use all the words on the sheet.
- 3 Explain that their sentences can be as long or as short as they wish, and tell them that they can add grammatical words (e.g. auxiliary verbs, linking words, pronouns and articles) which do not appear on the sheet to help them make their sentences grammatically correct. This is a good opportunity to point out to your students the elliptical nature of headlines by writing two or three headlines on the board and showing the kind of words that are commonly deleted (refer to Appendix 1).
- 4 Tell your students that as they use a word, they should tick it on the sheet and not use that word again. They should write out in a list all the sentences they make, adding the appropriate punctuation (e.g. full stops, commas, question marks).
- 5 As each pair finishes, ask them to exchange their list with another pair to check the sentences they have each produced.
- 6 Finally, ask pairs to read out their lists of sentences, and discuss their

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accuracy with the class. Deal with any language problems as they arise.

Extensions

You can use this same sheet in future lessons for a variety of tasks:

- 1 Look for examples of prefixes or suffixes.
- 2 Look for different types of collocation (e.g. noun + noun, as in *price rise*, or adjective + noun, as in *private word*).
- 3 Make a list of all the words that contain a particular sound (e.g. /æ/).
- 4 Classify the words into nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and so on.
- 5 Find words which can be a verb as well as a noun (e.g. *hand*, *page*, *stone*).
- 6 Find different pronunciations for a particular letter of the alphabet (e.g. Y – *try*, *system*, *country*), or for a combination of letters (e.g. OO – *good*, *flood*, *poor*).
- 7 Classify words according to the sense (i.e. smell, taste, touch, hearing, sight) with which students associate them.
- 8 Find words belonging to the same lexical group (e.g. words connected with *family*).

Variation

Instead of asking your students to make complete sentences, tell them to use the words to make newspaper headlines of any length, and allow these to have grammatical words omitted. The headlines can be discussed with the whole class, and students asked to make up stories which relate to the headlines.

Comment

An open-ended activity of this type is particularly well-suited to mixed-ability classes, in that it allows all the students in the class to produce language at their own level of proficiency. Higher-level students are challenged to produce more linguistically complex sentences, whilst even the students in the class with the least English will achieve a measure of success.

Note

Broadsheets (or broadsheet newspapers) are large-sized newspapers, and are printed on a size of paper known as broadsheet, hence this term. They are sometimes referred to as *the qualities*, or *the heavies*

(referring to the weekend editions of certain broadsheets which contain so many pages that they are physically quite heavy to carry). Broad-sheets are considered to be informative and objective, keeping news and opinion or comment firmly apart. They present the reader with serious news, which is supported with detailed and informed analysis and comment on economic, political, social and world events. Such newspapers in Britain include *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian*.

Tabloids (or tabloid newspapers) are newspapers whose pages are about half the size of broadsheet newspapers. All popular newspapers in Britain are tabloids, far exceeding the broadsheets in their sales. Typically, tabloids contain many photographs, attention-grabbing headlines and sensational stories, often concerning scandal involving prominent figures and personalities in the public eye. They are considered to be more entertaining than informative in terms of their news coverage, so much so that *tabloid* is frequently used in a pejorative sense when talking about the press collectively. Such newspapers in Britain include the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Express*.

Cross-references

A quick oral version of 10.4 can serve as a suitable lead-in activity. The headlines used in most of the other activities in this chapter can be recycled in this activity.

1.2 Headline halves

Matching halves of newspaper headlines

Level: Post-Elementary–Intermediate

Preparation

MAIN ACTIVITY

Compile a list of between eight and ten headlines, each of which should consist of six or more words. The meanings of the headlines should be transparent, i.e. there should be no word play or ambiguity.

EXTENSION

Paste the accompanying articles (without the headlines) onto a sheet of paper, numbering them for ease of reference. Deal with any vocabulary or language problems by adding a gloss (a translation or an explanation),

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and make one copy of this sheet for each student in the class. Keep the matching headlines for the final stage to check your students' answers.

In class

- 1 On the left-hand side of the board, write the beginnings of the headlines you have chosen. On the other side of the board, write the endings of these headlines, but in a jumbled order. Deal with any vocabulary or language problems at this stage of the activity.
- 2 Explain to your students that the headline endings on the right complete the beginnings on the left, but that they are in a jumbled order. Tell them that they should try to find as many possible matching endings for each headline beginning as they can. Their complete headlines should have meaning, and they should form grammatically possible combinations (allowing for the elliptical nature of many headlines).
- 3 Begin the activity. When your students are ready, ask them to compare and discuss their complete headlines with a partner.
- 4 To check your students' answers, ask them to call out their complete headlines, and discuss each one with the class in terms of its grammatical acceptability and whether it has meaning. To check this last point, ask your students to briefly tell the stories behind their headlines.
- 5 Finally, tell your students the original (complete) headlines.

Extension

After Stage 4 of the activity, give each student a copy of the articles sheet, and tell them that they should read the articles and try to re-create the original headlines from the headline beginnings and endings on the board.

When your students are ready, ask them to read aloud the headline(s) they wrote for each article. Finally, deal with any articles for which your students had problems finding a suitable headline.

Cross-references

The same headlines can later be used in 1.1, 1.10, and 1.16.

1.3 **Headline hangman**

Playing 'Hangman' to discover newspaper headlines

Level: Post-Elementary–Advanced

Preparation

Select three or four short articles with headlines containing two or more words. Remove the headlines and paste the articles onto a sheet of paper, numbering them for ease of reference. Make one copy of this sheet for each student in the class. Keep the headlines safe, as these will later serve as your answer key.

In class

- 1 Give each student in the class a copy of the articles sheet and tell them to read the first article. Deal with any language or vocabulary problems as they arise.
- 2 On the board, for each word in the headline of the first article, draw a short line, and explain to your students that each line represents one word.
- 3 Tell your students that to discover the original headline, they should call out individual words they think are in the headline. If a word is correct, you will write it in its correct position on the board. If a word is not correct, you will draw one part of the well-known hangman diagram.
- 4 Begin the activity, and continue play until your students have guessed the whole headline correctly, or have used up all their guesses and are 'hanged'.
- 5 Continue this procedure for each of the remaining articles.

Extension

In a future lesson, ask your students to find short newspaper articles and make up their own headline hangman game to play in class with a partner.

Comment

This activity is a fun way for your students to discover important structural and stylistic features of headlines, and you may even wish to select headlines which all focus on one particular feature (refer to Appendix 1).

Cross-references

This can serve as a suitable lead-in to 2.6, 2.14, 2.15, 2.19, 2.22 and 2.24. The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10, and 1.16.

1.4 Ask the right question

Writing and answering questions about newspaper headlines

Level: Pre-Intermediate–Post-Intermediate

Preparation

Select a number of newspaper articles covering a range of subject-matter, making sure that you choose articles with headlines that are easy to understand. You will need as many articles as you have students in the class, plus one other (with its corresponding headline) to demonstrate the activity. Remove the headlines, and paste (or copy) each one onto a separate sheet of paper, leaving plenty of space below for writing. Display these headline sheets around the classroom, on walls or desktops. Paste each article onto a separate sheet of paper and add a gloss (a translation or an explanation) where necessary to deal with key vocabulary. Keep the articles for the final stages of the activity.

In class

- 1 To demonstrate the activity, write your sample headline on the board and ask your students to imagine what information an article with this headline might contain. Tell them to put their ideas in the form of questions. Write their questions on the board (e.g. *What's the boy's name? How old is he? Where did it happen?*).
- 2 When they have exhausted their ideas, answer as many of their questions as you can by referring to the original article. Your students may be quite surprised to see how many of their questions the article answers.
- 3 Pre-teach any problem vocabulary in the headline sheets on display, then ask your students to read all the sheets, and each choose a different one.
- 4 Tell your students that they should now go from sheet to sheet and, on each one, write a question which they think an accompanying article would answer. They should write clearly, and leave room for an answer to be written.

- 5 When there are several questions on each of the headline sheets, ask your students to claim the headline they first chose. Give each student their matching article and explain that everyone should now read their articles and try to answer any questions they can.
- 6 When all your students have done this, ask them to display their articles and headline sheets together on walls or desktops. Tell everyone to circulate and check to see if their questions have been answered.
- 7 Finally, explain to your students that it is often possible to predict or anticipate a certain amount of information to be found in an article if we understand the headline. This can help us in our reading of a text.

Cross-references

This can serve as a suitable lead-in to 2.5, 2.6, 2.9, 2.11, 2.14, 2.15, 2.18, 2.22 and 2.24. The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10 and 1.16. The same materials can be used in 2.17.

1.5 Frames

Writing progressively longer headlines

Level: Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

Choose three or four short articles which you feel would interest your students, cut off the headlines, and paste each article at the bottom of a sheet of paper. Add a gloss (a translation or an explanation) to deal with problem vocabulary or language where necessary. Make enough copies of each article for several pairs of students to have the same article. Keep the headlines for the final stage of the activity, and make a note of which articles they accompany.

In class

- 1 Pair students and give each pair one of the articles, making sure that several pairs have copies of the same article in order to cross-check their answers later.
- 2 Explain that each pair should read their article carefully, discuss its contents and then write one (or more) suitable one-word headline(s) at the top of the page. Below this, they should then write one (or

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- more) suitable two-word headline(s), then headlines with three words, and then four words, and so on until they have written the longest possible headline they can to accompany their article.
- 3 When your students have written as many headlines as they can, put two pairs with the same article together, and ask them to compare their work. They should look for identical headlines they have written, and comment on the appropriacy of any different ones.
 - 4 After this checking stage, work with the whole class and discuss any particularly interesting headlines your students wrote, focusing on any which seem inappropriate within the context of the article, and any which are grammatically unacceptable.
 - 5 Finally, show your students the original headlines which accompanied their articles.

Comment

Before trying this activity, your students should already be familiar with different types of headline (refer to Appendix 1).

Cross-references

This can serve as a suitable follow-up to 1.8. The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10 and 1.16.

1.6 One step at a time

Progressively changing one headline into another

Level: Post-Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

MAIN ACTIVITY

Find two headlines where the only common feature is the number of words – between three and six words is the optimum number.

EXTENSION

Make copies of the two accompanying articles for your students to read at the end of the activity.

In class

- 1 Write the two headlines on the board, pair students and ask each pair to copy them – the first at the top of a sheet of paper, the other at the bottom of the sheet.
- 2 Explain that by changing only one word at a time, they should progressively change the first headline into the second headline. Each time they do this, they should write the new headline below the previous one. Their aim is to reach the second headline with as few new headlines as possible.
- 3 Point out that each new headline they make will tell a different story, and that they should be able to make up suitable stories to match their new headlines.
- 4 Begin the activity. Circulate to help your students if they get stuck, and to give encouragement.
- 5 When your students are ready, put two pairs together and ask them to compare their work. Tell them that each pair should briefly tell the stories behind the new headlines they have made.
- 6 At the end of the activity, find out which pair(s) managed to change the first headline into the second in the minimum number of moves, and tell them to write their headlines on the board.
- 7 If you wish, you can allow the class to challenge any doubtful headline by asking to hear the story behind the headline.

Extension

Give your students a copy of the original articles for them to read.

Comment

This activity is based on a popular word game in newspapers where the player has to convert one word (e.g. *said*) into another word with the same number of letters (e.g. *tell*) in the minimum number of moves.

Cross-references

The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10 and 1.16.

1.7 Unlocking headlines

Understanding tabloid headline words through synonyms in the article

Level: Pre-Intermediate–Post-Intermediate

Preparation

Cut out several short articles from tabloid newspapers (see note in 1.1) with headlines containing examples of *tabloidese* (also called *journal-ese*) – short, sensational and often exaggerated words (see note below). You should make sure that each of the articles you choose contains a synonym (the more usual word) in the text which corresponds to the headline tabloidese word – this is invariably the case (see Box 1 for example headlines and texts). Paste each article onto a separate sheet of paper, underline the tabloidese word in each headline, and number each sheet for ease of reference.

In class

- 1 Write the list of tabloidese words on the board and ask your students to copy them. While they are doing this, display the article sheets around the classroom.
- 2 Explain to your students that all the words on the board have been taken from newspaper headlines and that such headlines can be difficult to understand. An important reason for this is that newspapers often try to sensationalise news, and powerful headline words have a greater impact on the reader. In addition, headline space is limited, and tabloidese words are usually shorter than their more everyday synonyms.
- 3 Explain to your students that they should look at each article, find the underlined tabloidese word there in the headline, and look for a synonym in the accompanying article. Because these tabloidese words are often difficult, you should allow your students to look them up in a dictionary. They should write the synonym next to the corresponding tabloidese word on their list. They should then read the headline again, replacing the tabloidese word with the synonym, to see if the headline now makes (more) sense and is easier to understand.
- 4 When your students have finished, ask them to compare their answers with a partner.
- 5 Check the answers with the whole class and ask if they found the headlines easier to understand with the help of the synonyms.

- 6 Finally, discuss the use of the tabloidese word and its synonym in each article with your students to discover which of the two words is the most accurate and appropriate. Bring out the point clearly that the restriction of space in headlines, and the headline writer's attempt to grab the public's attention with short, expressive, sensational words, may lead to headlines being exaggerated and distorted. Fortunately, the truth of the matter is invariably revealed soon into the body of the article.

Box 1 **Example texts**

Garage blast kills driver

An elderly man was killed yesterday in an explosion on a garage forecourt ...

BT to slash calls cost

British Telecom announced plans yesterday to reduce the price of international calls by ...

PM woos reject Tories

In a surprise move to win the support of Conservative MPs who lost their seats in the General Election, Prime Minister ...

Comment

The problem of vocabulary in newspaper headlines is a significant factor in discouraging teachers and students from working with newspapers at early stages of learning. This activity can help to show that headlines containing examples of tabloidese are less intimidating than they seem.

Note

In order to make the greatest possible impact on the reader, journalists have created their own particular jargon, often referred to as *tabloidese* or *journalese*. This is the use of short, powerful words intended for effect, e.g. *rap*, *slam*, *axe*, *chaos*, *crusade*, *dash*, and many more. For language students, this use of language can present a major obstacle to understanding English-language newspaper headlines.

This is hardly surprising for, as Keith Waterhouse (1993,

pp. 229–230) points out, this genre of language is not one that people actually use in normal, everyday speech: ‘Why, if these words are now so common, are they not in common use? Why do we not hear housewives at bus-stops saying, “Our Marlene used to be a till girl at that blaze superstore” or “Did I tell you about young Fred being rapped after he slammed his boss? He thinks he’s going to be axed.”’

Although tabloidese is now ingrained in the British tabloid press, and leaving aside the fact that it bears no resemblance to the language people use in real life, there are other important arguments against its use: a headline such as *Judge slams shock jury decision* includes a value judgement made by the journalist writing the article, but it is presented under the guise of legitimate description. Here, it is the journalist’s opinion that the decision is ‘shocking’, yet the job of a journalist is to present news and let the readers judge for themselves whether a particular news item is sensational, dramatic, disturbing or, indeed, shocking.

Also, many headlines containing examples of tabloidese are quite simply gross exaggerations of the reality, and quite misleading. Every disagreement becomes a ‘dispute’, bad luck becomes a ‘curse’, and a traffic jam becomes ‘road chaos’.

Tabloidese today can be considered almost as a fossilised genre, and it is so over-used that it now has little, if any, impact on the reader. It is, however, here to stay, and is slowly influencing the headline-writers of broadsheet newspapers.

Cross-references

The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10 and 1.16.

1.8 Headline features

Finding stylistic and structural headline features

Level: Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

From Appendix 1, choose one or more stylistic (and/or structural) features used in newspaper headlines which you feel would be suitable for the level of your students. In addition, bring to class a supply of newspapers, pairs of scissors, sheets of A3 paper, and glue.

In class

- 1 Give a short explanation to your students of the newspaper headline feature(s) you have chosen, using examples from Appendix 1, and/or any others you can find yourself.
- 2 Write the name of each feature on a separate sheet of A3 paper and place these on different tables around the room.
- 3 Tell your students that their task is to find as many examples of these features as they can in the headlines in the newspapers you have brought in. Tell them that they should cut out their examples and place them on the appropriate sheet.
- 4 When your students have collected several examples of each feature, bring the class together and ask them to comment on the correctness of the examples on each sheet. If they are correct, paste them down. If not, ask your students to decide which headline feature they do exemplify.
- 5 These sheets can then be displayed around the classroom walls, added to in future lessons, and used with other groups.

Extension 1

If you are working in a non-English-speaking country, ask your students for homework to look for parallel headline features in their own newspapers, and bring examples of these to the next lesson.

Extension 2

In future lessons, deal progressively with other features of headlines to give your students a more complete overview.

Comment

This activity helps show students that newspaper headlines constitute a genre in their own right, and contain stylistic and structural features which are typical of this genre.

Cross-references

The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10 and 1.16. For a suitable follow-up activity, see 1.5.

1.9 Ambiguity

Rewriting ambiguous headlines to make their meanings clear

Level: Post-Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

From Box 2 below, choose between five and ten examples of ambiguous headlines.

In class

- 1 Write one of the ambiguous headlines on the board (e.g. *Kids make nutritious snacks*) and ask your students to explain the meaning of this headline. If your students fail to see the double meaning, tell them that the headline has two meanings (i.e. it is ambiguous). The amusing interpretation (i.e. that eating children is a nutritious way to appease your hunger) is almost certainly not the one the headline writer intended.
- 2 Now ask your students to suggest ways the headline could be rewritten to make its intended meaning clear. The simplest solution is to change the verb *make* to *prepare* to produce *Kids prepare nutritious snacks*.
- 3 Put your students into groups of three, write several other ambiguous headlines on the board and ask your students to copy them. Make it clear that all these headlines have double meanings.
- 4 Explain that each group should try to find the double meanings in the headlines and then rewrite each headline with the meaning the headline writer probably intended, making the minimum number of changes to the original headline. Allow your students to use dictionaries to look up any problem vocabulary.
- 5 When your students are ready, check the answers with the whole class. Establish the two meanings of each headline and ask groups to call out their rewritten versions for the intended meaning of each headline. Write these on the board and discuss their appropriateness with your students.

Extension 1

Ask each group to choose one of the ambiguous headlines and write a short News in Brief item for their headline, but based on the amusing, unintentional meaning.

Extension 2

With an advanced class, ask your students to try to identify and explain the cause of the ambiguity in the headlines. There may be a number of causes, including ambiguous word order, ambiguous grammatical structure, lack of hyphens (e.g. *Squad helps dog-bite victim*) or other punctuation (e.g. *Teacher strikes – idle kids*), polysemy and homonyms.

Cross-references

The same headlines can be used in 1.1, 1.10, 1.14 and 1.16.

Box 2 **Sample ambiguous headlines**

Kids make nutritious snacks

Squad helps dog bite victim

Miners refuse to work after death

Hospitals are sued by 7 foot doctors

Panda mating fails; veterinarian takes over

Lung cancer in women mushrooms

Eye drops off shelf

Safety experts say school bus passengers should be belted

Teacher strikes idle kids

US President wins on budget, but more lies ahead

Shot off woman's leg helps golfer to 66

Juvenile court to try shooting defendant

Stolen painting found by tree

Drunken drivers paid \$1000

Red tape holds up new bridge

Chef throws his heart into helping feed needy

Arson suspect is held in Massachusetts fire

Local high school dropouts cut in half

New vaccine may contain rabies

Include your children when baking cookies

1.10 Categories

Categorising newspaper headlines

Level: Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

Compile a sheet of complete newspaper headlines of varying lengths, make one copy for each group of three students in the class, and cut each sheet into individual headlines to make sets. Store each set in an envelope for safe-keeping.

In class

- 1 Put students into groups of three and give each group one set of headlines. Ask them to read the headlines. Deal with any vocabulary or language problems at this stage of the activity.
- 2 Explain to your students that they should try to put all these headlines into three or more different categories. Tell them that they can categorise the headlines in any way they wish, with one exception – they cannot group headlines according to the number of words they contain.
- 3 Begin the activity. When your students are ready, put two groups together and ask them to explain their categories to each other.
- 4 Allow a few minutes for this exchange, then, working with the class together, ask groups to call out different ways they categorised the headlines, and discuss these with your students.

Comment

This activity is open enough to allow students to categorise the headlines in a number of ways, e.g. according to the particular stylistic and/or structural features they contain (refer to Appendix 1), their internal structure, the meanings behind the headlines, and also your students' personal reactions to them.

Cross-references

The same headlines can be used in 1.2. The headlines used in most of the other activities in this chapter can be recycled in this activity.

1.11 Me in headlines

Exchanging personal information using headline collages

Level: Pre-Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

Before the lesson, make up a collage which gives personal information about yourself using only newspaper headlines – complete headlines, phrases and even individual words (see Box 3 for author’s personal collage). You should feel comfortable about explaining anything in your collage to your students. In addition, bring to class several newspapers, pairs of scissors, sheets of A3 paper, and glue.

In class

- 1 Show your students your headline collage and explain how the words and phrases relate to you personally. Encourage your students to discover information by asking you questions about anything they do not immediately understand.
- 2 Tell your students that they are going to make up similar collages containing information about themselves, also using words and phrases taken from newspaper headlines.
- 3 Put glue, scissors, paper and newspapers at everyone’s disposal, and begin the activity. While your students are working, circulate to deal with any vocabulary and language problems as they arise.
- 4 When your students have finished their collages, ask them to work with a partner to explain and discuss their collages. Allow a few minutes for this first exchange, and then ask your students to change partners.
- 5 Continue this procedure of exchanging collage information with different partners for as long as your students’ interest and energy holds.
- 6 Finally, ask your students to display their collages around the classroom walls. This is an attractive and decorative way of personalising their classroom.

Cross-references

See 10.11 for an expanded version of this activity using a mixture of newspaper items.

Box 3 **Author's personal collage**

1 **Coffee, croissant, and a splash of Sartre**

2 **Stand up for Britain**

3 **1001 uses for your old Amstrad**

4 **mobile phones**

5 **in your living room**

6 **Cable car disaster**

7 **home for Christmas**

8 **Get fit to stay ahead**

9 **SOCCER FAN**

10 **Pictures worth taking**

Explanatory notes

- 1 Early morning breakfasts in Paris, sitting in a café and watching people hurry to work. Something I adore.
- 2 I'm constantly trying to defend English cuisine. Yet even before I begin, I know it's a lost cause, especially when I'm talking to people from France, or Italy, or Spain, or...
- 3 My first computer was an Amstrad, and it made preparing lessons so much simpler and a lot more fun. It was a faithful servant for several years. I gave it away to a computerless friend one Christmas.
- 4 I hate them! It drives me to distraction if someone receives a call when I'm with them and they ignore me for the next fifteen minutes. I feel like getting up and going.
- 5 My living room is the room I like most in my flat. It's bright and warm and cheerful, with lots of plants and pictures. It's a room where I can really relax.

- 6 I find the thought of this really quite horrific. I don't think I'm particularly afraid of heights, but I do have a fear of falling from a high building or from the edge of a cliff.
- 7 I rarely go home to Britain for Christmas, but last year I did. I had a fantastic time with a wonderful group of friends, and I think I was struck by how much I missed Christmas in my own country. It made me feel very homesick.
- 8 I'm ashamed to say that I haven't done any sport for years, and walking up five flights of stairs to my flat makes me very conscious of this – sometimes very unconscious!
- 9 This is something I'm definitely not! I really dislike football, and haven't watched a match for more than twenty years.
- 10 I'm a keen photographer, and I always look for an unusual angle on what seems like a rather bland subject.

1.12 Personal connections

Explaining personal reactions to headlines

Level: Intermediate–Advanced

Preparation

You will need to try this activity yourself before the lesson, in order to find headlines with which you feel a strong personal connection, or to which you react strongly. Very importantly, you should be able to explain very precisely why you feel these different reactions. For example, while looking through a recent newspaper, I found these two headlines:

Fast-food restaurants at Stonehenge?

WHEN IT'S BETTER TO TELL A LIE

These headlines provoked in me quite different thoughts and reactions, including:

'Oh, no! That would be a disaster.'

'That reminds me of the time I...'

In addition, you should bring to class two or three newspapers separated into individual pages.

In class

- 1 Tell your students that, while looking through a newspaper, you found a number of headlines (not the articles themselves) that you felt a personal connection with or reaction towards.
- 2 Write your sample headlines on the board, and explain as fully as you can to your students what these reactions were, and the reasons behind them. If you wish, allow your students to discuss their own reactions (if any) to these headlines and to question you about yours.
- 3 Tell your students that they should now look through the newspaper pages to find headlines that they also feel a strong personal connection with or reaction towards. Tell them that they should copy out the headlines onto a sheet of paper.
- 4 Begin the activity. Circulate to deal with any vocabulary or language problems as they arise.
- 5 When everyone has found at least two headlines, form groups of three students and ask them to read their chosen headlines to their partners, and explain why they chose them.
- 6 If you wish, you can invite students to read aloud any headlines they felt particularly strongly about and which they would like to discuss with the class.

Comment

It is difficult to understand all the factors that attract us towards one particular article before, or instead of, another. However, the degree of personal identification with the headline which the reader experiences clearly plays an important role.

1.13 Headline combinations

Creating headlines and inventing matching stories

Level: Pre-Intermediate–Intermediate

Preparation

MAIN ACTIVITY

Find six very short news items with headlines containing two words only – a total of twelve words. Copy out the six headlines for your own reference. It is worth noting that several types of two-word collocation are commonly found in newspaper headlines: *missing link*,